

Rockport Harbor Hotel
January 11, 2022

To: Rockport Planning Board & 20 Central Street, LLC.
Subject: Exterior Balconies

From: John Hansen, Architect

John E. Hansen, Maine Licensed Architect #1110, 634 Spruce Head Rd., South Thomaston, ME 04858. Licensed in Maine in 1982.

From 1973 to 1983 I was employed in Rockport, Maine at “The Maine Group” located at 10 Summer Street, the historic Rockport School. While at the Maine Group, design projects included the 1974 Samoset Hotel & Convention Center after the fire in 1972 which destroyed the historic hotel. Other projects included many waterfront residential projects as well as educational, commercial and health care.

After licensing in 1982 I established my practice in South Thomaston in 1983. Projects have included hotels, municipal buildings, fire stations, day care centers, churches, multi-family, recreation facilities, industrial projects and many residential projects.

The Knox Mill in Camden, after being acquired by credit card issuer, MBNA in 1991 asked me to assist in expansion of the mill buildings to include renovations and new construction on the main site and on several adjacent properties. I developed a relationship with the design staff of MBNA who when MBNA was sold to Bank of America, formed an Architectural, Engineering and Project Management in Camden which is now known as Cordjia Capital Projects Group. Over the last 20 years I have assisted Cordjia in several historic projects in Maine. First was the Saco Island Mill Complex which included residential use, commercial office space and a brewpub. All was located within the existing brick mill buildings, it was reviewed and approved by the National Park Service for Federal tax incentives in 2004 through 2009.

Second was the former Hallowell House, an historic structure in Hallowell Maine which was renovated and expanded for the headquarters of the Maine Public Utilities Commission in 2008. This project was reviewed by the Maine Historic Preservation Commission. The exterior of the existing building retained its historic appearance but all new construction could not appear to be historic and could not appear to be a part of the original building.

When working with historic structures or historic areas there are usually various requirements whether it is the National Park Service or the Maine Historic Preservation Commission. Rockport Harbor Hotel is not bound by approvals of either of these entities, while the Architectural Design Standards of the Site Plan Review Ordinance are subjective standards.

Contrary to assumptions by the public, most guidelines for new construction in a historic district or additions to a historic structure must not make the new work appear to be part of the historic buildings. The guidelines discourage the duplication of the exact form, material, style and detailing of the historic building so that the new building or addition does not appear to be historic. The new building should appear as a complimentary structure using similar forms, materials, and color, but in a manner that does not duplicate it, but distinguishes the new building or addition from the historic buildings.

The following statements are taken from the District of Columbia Historic Preservation Guidelines for New Construction in Historic Districts. This is typical of many guidelines for new construction in historic districts.

- 1. The key to the design of a new building that enhances the existing environment is the compatibility with neighboring buildings.*
- 2. Compatibility is achieved through careful attention to design principles including; setback, orientation, scale, proportion, rhythm, massing, height, materials, colors, roof shape, details and ornamentation.*
- 3. Compatibility does not mean exactly duplicating the existing buildings or environment. A new building should be seen as a product of its own time.*
- 4. To reproduce a historic building, or to copy exactly a style from the past, creates a false sense of history. By relating to the existing buildings and the environment, but being of its own time, a new building shows a district's evolution just as the existing buildings show its past.*

The Rockport Architectural Design Standards require the design of structures and their materials and colors to be “visually harmonious” with the overall appearance of neighboring structures. These standards apply to all buildings in Rockport that are reviewed under the Site Plan Review Ordinance.

A tour of Rockport Village will show many buildings with balconies, including historic structures. Balconies are found throughout Rockport Village.

Dictionary definitions of “Harmonious” can be found such as: 1. Agreement; accord; harmonious relations. 2. A consistent orderly, or pleasing arrangement of parts; congruity. 3. Order or conformity of parts to their whole or to one another.

The design of the Rockport Harbor Hotel is clearly visually harmonious with its neighboring structures. The projections of the building and balconies provide rhythm and the massing articulates the facade with balconies integral to the building and cantilevered balconies. The details of the balconies incorporate painted structural steel and brick as used on neighboring buildings. The building scale elements include doors, windows and cornices. The colors include painted trim, natural slate shingles, red brick and natural granite elements. The roof shape is similar to the nearby Union Hall. The details and ornamentation relate to the adjacent buildings and the height of the building is balanced between the height of the adjacent buildings. The building respects the proportions of existing nearby buildings but does not exactly duplicate the existing proportions of neighboring buildings.

In conclusion, harmony in design in a new building in a historic district should relate to the existing structures by maintaining a reasonable compatibility while not appearing to be a part of existing historic structures. The inclusion of balconies provides added massing, scale, rhythm, and proportion while using materials and elements found in the neighborhood but being of its own time, it shows a district's evolution, just as the existing historic buildings show its past.

John